

The Prohibition of Photography

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One of the greatest calamities of our times is the abuse of the camera.

In this day and age, with the easy availability of cell-phones, digital cameras, camcorders, etc. everyone seems to be in possession of a tool which has created an upheaval in mischief. ...How many have had their names dragged through the mud or have been black-mailed, slandered or left humiliated and disgraced due to photographs taken and then circulated?

Photography is an evil which has been entirely misjudged and under-estimated.

Just recently, a brother related a dream to me, requesting an interpretation. I interpreted his dream saying: 'It seems as if movies are being viewed in the Masjid.'

Within a matter of days, the interpretation was made apparent. We had a visiting 'Aalim give a talk in our Masjid. I was sitting on a chair, near the front, when I observed three young boys very absorbed with their cell phones. I requested a friend to go to the back of the Masjid and see what they were up to. He observed that they were viewing some film with dirty, indecent pictures. **إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ**. We give our children high-technology at the expense of hayaa (modesty), Deen and Imaan.

One is to have no shame and commit sins in the presence of Allah Ta'ala, but increasing in shamelessness is when one is brazen enough to commit sins in the presence of Allah Ta'ala, whilst in the Masjid, the House of Allah Ta'ala.

The same shamelessness is found en-masse in the Masjid of all Masaajid, Masjidul Haraam in Makkah Shareef. The objective of the majority visiting these days, is taking photographs and video recording, instead of engaging in Ibaadah.

Complaints - and it is even our experience - of flashes and clicks of the camera, seen or heard, whilst Salaah is in progress or whilst in Tawaaf.

There is a very dire need to explain that this is a grave and serious crime in the sight of Allah Ta'ala.

What needs to be understood is that photography of anything animate is a clear prohibition. It is Haraam.

It has been narrated from Hazrat Jabir (RA) that Rasulullah (1) forbade pictures in the house and he forbade making them.

Rasulullah (1) said: "Verily, of the most grievously tormented people on the Day of Resurrection are picture-makers." [1]

There are, in fact, many other Ahaadeeth, which clearly prove this prohibition.

Why did Allah Ta'ala prohibit photography?

One reason is quite clear; that it was the origin of Shirk (polytheism): Going down the passage of history, we find that mankind was introduced to idol worship due

to shaytaan's efforts in leading mankind astray. So due to his whispering encouragement, people began to draw and sketch their pious predecessors, thinking that their faces and images will be a source of inspiration; an incentive to also follow in their footsteps of piety. However, it was the means by which many began to worship those pictures, and thereafter carved such idols; and idol worship came into vogue.

Whilst this would have been more than sufficient for the Believer, it is no longer considered a worthy reason by Muslims who want to engage in the sin. Many say that there is no way that they would worship a photograph or even a sketch, let alone an idol

. My Shaykh, Hazrat Maulana Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar Saheb (Daamat Barakaatuhum) explains that one reason behind the prohibition is so that Allah Ta'ala may protect the respect and dignity of His servants.

Many a time, a person who was engaged in various evils is granted hidayah (guidance). Sometimes, this hidayah is such that he attains a high stage of Wilayah. The person becomes a great Wali (Friend) of Allah Ta'ala and even a Shaykh, and thousands of people throng to his gatherings. Now at such a time, if someone were to dig up pictures of his past ... what embarrassment would he have to endure?

From Allah Ta'ala's side, there is forgiveness of sins, on sincere taubah, to the extent, that all evidence is 'deleted' and Insha-Allah, the person will not have to render an account for those sins. However, if photographs were taken, then this is evidence which the person has produced against himself, and which cannot always be destroyed – especially if it is in the hands of others who wish to bring disgrace to the person.

My Shaykh mentioned the above reason, during an election in Pakistan, where a woman was a candidate in the election. She was blackmailed with photographs of herself in a compromising situation, so that she withdraws.

Further to this reason, we find that the porn industry and filthy films are all based on pictures. Islam nips the problem in the bud by prohibiting photography. If everyone practiced upon this teaching, we would not have pornography, woman abuse and exploitation, child pornography, and the evil consequences of rape, insanity, suicide, incest, etc., much of which has shattered and devastated the marriages and homes of many Muslims.

Now thinking over all these harms, we should appreciate the prohibition all the more and show that appreciation by abstaining. There is nothing but great wisdom in the prohibitions of Allah Ta'ala, with nothing but good for His servants.

[1] Sahih Bukhari